

DRESSING UP

By W. R. Burnett.

This Remarkable Story of the Underworld Was a Co-winner of the 1930 O. Henry Memorial Prize. It Has Been Judged One of the Finest Short Stories of the Past Year.

WHEN the store manager saw Blue and his girl Birdy coming in the front door he turned to Al, one of the clerks, and said:

"Look at this, Al. The stockyards removing downtown."

Al laughed, then he put on his best professional manner, clasped his hands in front of his stomach, inclined his head slightly, and walked up to Blue.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

Blue was short and stocky. His legs were thin, his waist small, but his shoulders were wide enough for a man 6 feet tall. His face was red and beefy, and his cheekbones were so prominent that they stuck out of his face. He looked at Al.

"I'm buying an outfit, see," he said. "I'm gonna shed these rags and climb into something slick."

"Yes, sir," said Al. "How about one of our new Spring models?"

"He wants a gray suit," said Birdy, adjusting her new fur neckpiece.

"Double-breasted," said Blue.

"Yes, sir," said Al. "But first I want some silk underwear," said Blue. "I'm dressing from the hide out."

The store manager came over and smiled.

"Take good care of this young man, won't you, Mr. Johnson?"

"Yes, sir," said Al.

"Warm, isn't it?" the store manager said to Birdy.

"Yeah, ain't it?" said Birdy, taking off her neckpiece and dangling it over her arm like the women in the advertisements.

The store manager walked to the back of the shop and talked to the cashier:

"There's a boy that's got a big hunk of money all of a sudden," he said, "and he's gonna lose it the same way."

"Yeah?" said the cashier. "Well, I wish my rich uncle that I haven't got would die. Take a look at that neckpiece his girl's wearing. He didn't get that for \$5."

AL spread out the silk underwear on the counter, and Blue looked through it. Birdy held up a lavender shirt.

"Here you are, Blue. Here's what you ought to get."

"Say . . . !" said Blue.

"Yes, sir," said Al; "we're selling lots of that. Just had an order for a dozen suits from a gentleman out in Lake Forest."

"That's where the swells come from," said Birdy.

Blue looked at the lavender shirt and the lavender shorts and said:

"All right. I'll take a dozen."

Al glanced up from his order book, caught the manager's eye, and winked. The manager came up to Blue, put his hand on his shoulder and said:

"My dear sir, since you seem to know real stuff when you see it, I'll let you in on something. We got a new shipment of cravats that we have only just begun to unpack. But if you'd like to look at them, I'll send down to the stock room for them."

"Sure," said Blue.

"Thanks awfully," said Birdy. "It's our very best stock. Handmade cravats of the best material obtainable."

"We want the best, don't we, Blue?" said Birdy.

"Sure," said Blue.

While the manager sent for the cravats, Blue bought a dozen silk shirts, some collars, a solid gold collar pin, some onyx cuff links, a set of military brushes and two dozen pairs of socks. Al bent over his order book and wrote in the items swiftly, computing the possible amount of this windfall. In a few minutes a stock boy brought up the neckties and stood with his mouth open while Blue selected a dozen of the most expensive ties. The manager noticed him.

"Just leave the rest of the stock, please," he said; then he turned his back to Blue and snarled, "Get out of here!"

The stock boy went back to the basement, and the manager turned back to Blue, smiling.

"Those cravats retail at \$4 apiece," he said, "but because you're giving us such a nice order, I'll let you have them for three fifty."

"O. K.," said Blue.

"They sure are swell ties, Blue," said Birdy, putting her arm through his. "Won't we be lit up though?"

"Sure," said Blue.

When the accessories had been selected, Blue began to try on the suits Al brought him. Blue strode up and down in front of the big triple mirror, puffed out his chest, struck attitudes, and studied his profile, which he had never seen before except in one Bertillon picture. Al stayed at his elbow, offering suggestions, helping him with the set of a coat, telling him how wonderful he looked; and the manager stayed in the background, occasionally making a remark to Birdy, whom he addressed as "Madam."

Blue, after a long consultation with Birdy, selected two of the most expensive suits; a blue serge single-breasted and a gray double-breasted. Then he bought a gray felt hat at \$12, a small sailor at \$8 and a panama at \$18.

"Well," said Blue, "I guess you guys got about as much of my jack as you're gonna get."

"How about shoes?" Al put in.

"Gosh, I forgot," said Blue. "Hey, Birdy, I forgot shoes. Ain't that good? Look at this suitcase!"

He held up his foot. He was wearing big tan brogans, and there was a hole in the sole which went clear through the sock to the skin.

"Put your foot down, Blue," said Birdy. "Where you think you're at?"

Blue bought a pair of tan oxfords, a pair of black oxfords and a pair of white and tan sport shoes.

"Now, we're done," said Blue. "I guess I ought to look pretty Boul' Mich' now."

AL totaled up the bill. Birdy and the manager had a long conversation about the weather, and Blue stood before the triple mirror studying his profile.

Al hesitated before he told Blue the amount of the bill. He called for the manager to O. K. it, then he said:

"Cash or charge, sir?"

Blue took out his billfold, which was stuffed with big bills.

"Cash," he said. "How much?"

"Four hundred and sixty-five dollars," said Al.

Blue gave him five \$100 bills.

"Now," said Blue, "I want you to get that gray suit fixed up right away so's I can put it on. I'm gonna dress from the hide out, and you guys can throw my old duds in the sewer."

"Yes, sir," said Al. "I'll get our tailor right away. We got a dressing room on the second floor."

The cashier rang up the sale and gave the change to the manager.

"Are you going away for the Summer?" asked the manager as he handed Blue his change.

"Yeah," said Blue, "me and the girl friend are gonna see New York. It'll be our first trip."

"That'll be nice," said the manager. "Are you in business for yourself?"

Blue glanced at Birdy, and she shook her head slightly.

"I'm in the oil business," said Blue. "I got some wells. I'm from Oklahoma."

"That's interesting," said the manager.

When they were leaving the cafe Blue took out his billfold and gave the doorman a \$5 bill. The doorman's eyes popped, but he managed to bow and smile.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," he said. "Do you want a cab?"

"Yeah," said Blue, hanging on to Birdy, who was drunker than he was.

"Yeah, you're right, we want a cab," said Birdy. "Do we look like the kind of people that walk?"

"That's right," said Blue.

"Yes, sir," said the doorman, and he went out into the middle of the street and blew his whistle.

Before the taxi came a small sedan drew up at the curb across the street, and two men got out.

"There he is," said one of them, pointing at Blue.

"Hello, Guido," shouted Blue. "Look at me. Ain't I Boul' Mich'?"

Guido ran across the street, took Blue by the arm, shook him several times and said:

"You got to sober up, keed! Get it! You got to sober up. Somebody spilled something, see? Me and Bud's taking it on the lam. Saint Louie won't look bad to us."

"Yellow," said Blue.

"Sure," said Guido, "but I got a stake and I'm gonna spend some of it before I get bumped. Somebody wised Mike's boys up. They're looking for Pascal right now."

"What of it!" said Blue, laughing. "Look at me, Guido. Ain't I Boul' Mich'?" I got silk underwear under this suit. Look at Birdy."

"Look at me," said Birdy, "ain't I Boul' Mich'?"

"Say," said Guido, "you better ditch that tommy and put in with us. We got room in the heap."

"Not me," said Blue. "I ain't scared of Mike Bova. I'll bump him next."

"All right," said Guido; "you'll have a swell funeral."

"Guido," called the other man, "let that bum go."

"So long, Blue," said Guido.

"So long," said Blue.

"Bye, bye, Guido," said Birdy.

Guido crossed the street, got into the driver's seat, slammed the door, and the sedan moved off. The taxi was waiting and the doorman helped Birdy and Blue into it.

"Good night, sir," said the doorman.

BIRDY was lying on the lounge flat on her back with her hands under her head and an empty drinking glass sitting upright on her stomach. Blue in his shirtsleeves, his collar wilted and his tie untied, was sitting at the table reading a crumpled newspaper. There were three-inch headlines.

BOVA'S LIEUTENANT KILLED.
SHOT DOWN AS HE LEFT HIS
OFFICE BY GUNMEN.



"Then Pascal looks out the window and there's Pete on the sidewalk—and an old woman is pointing up at us."

"You hear me!" said Blue. "Funniest thing ever pulled. There I was waiting in a room across the street trying to read a magazine, and Pascal was sitting with his head against the wall sleeping. I says 'There's Pete now.' He was coming out of his office. We wasn't looking for him for two hours yet. So I just sat there. I couldn't move, see, 'cause he come sudden, see, and I was figuring he wouldn't be out for two hours yet. 'Pascal,' I says, 'there's Pete now.' But Pascal he just opens his eyes like a fish and don't say nothing."

"Pete he stops and looks right up at the window where I'm sitting, see, and I wonder does this guy know something. I couldn't move. I wasn't ready, see? Well, so Pascal he slips and falls over and hits his head. This makes me laugh, but still I couldn't move my trigger finger. Pete he holds out his hand like he's looking for rain, then I let him have it. I don't know. It was funny. I just let him have it without knowing it, see, and before, I couldn't pull that trigger when I wanted to."

"When the old cat starts to bark, Pascal gets up and yells. 'What you smoking for, you bum? It ain't time yet.' Then he looks out the window and there's Pete on the sidewalk dead as yesterday's newspaper and an old woman is pointing up at us. We ditch the gun and beat it down the back stairs."

"That's all there was to it. There wasn't nobody in the alley, see, so we just walked along slow, and pretty soon we come to a drugstore and went in to get some cigs 'cause we smoked all ours waiting for that guy to come out."

"Pour me a little drink, honey," said Blue.

Blue got up, took a big flask out of his hip pocket and poured Birdy another drink. Then he sat down, took out his billfold and extracted a couple of railroad tickets.

"Look at them, old kid," he said. "When we ride, we ride, Twentieth Century to New York. That's us, kid, and won't we give 'em a treat over in Brooklyn! Say, them Easterners think we're still shooting Indians. Why, Chicago makes that place look like a Y. M. C. A. Yeah, I used to know Ruby Welch, and he was big stuff from Brooklyn, but what did he do when Guido started gunning for him? He got himself put in the can as a vag."

"Yeah, we ought to go big over in New York, kid. When somebody needs somebody for the No. 1 caper, Blue's the guy for the job. I was born with a rod in my cradle and I'm the best there is. Yeah, when the Big Boy wanted Pete bumped, who did he call on first? Old Blue—yes, sir, old Blue."

Blue got up, turned on the phonograph and started to dance with a chair.

"Hey," he said, "come on, let's dance, Birdy. We're big shots now. Birdy, let's dance. Look at me! If I had my coat on I'd look like the Prince of Wales. Boul' Mich', kid; that's us; Boul' Mich'." "We'll knock their eyes out on Fifth avenue, kid; yes, sir. Let's dance."

"I'm getting sick," said Blue.

Blue went over and looked down at her. Her face was pale and drawn, there were blue circles under her eyes.

"Getting sick, Birdy?"

"Yeah, I can't stand it like I used to. Put me to bed, honey."

Blue picked Birdy up and carried her into the bed room. Birdy began to hiccup.

"Gimme glass of water," she said.

SHE lay down on the bed, and before Blue could bring her a glass of water she was asleep. He stood looking down at her, then he went back into the living room, took a long pull at his flask and picked up the crumpled newspaper. But he had read the account of the killing of Big Pete so many times that he knew it by heart. He sat staring at the paper, then he threw it on the floor and sat rolling a cigarette between his palms.

It had begun to get light. He heard a milk wagon passing. He got up and went over to the window. The houses were still dark, and far off down the street a string of lighted elevated cars ran along the horizon, but the sky was gray and in the east some of the clouds were turning yellow. It was quiet. Blue began to notice how quiet it was.

"Birdy," he called.

But he heard her snoring, and turned back to the table.

The telephone rang, but when he answered it there was nobody on the line.

"What's the idea?" he said.

He sat down at the table, took out his billfold and counted his money, then he took out the railroad tickets and read everything printed on

them. Again he noticed how quiet it was. He got up, put away his billfold and went into the bedroom. Birdy was sleeping with her mouth open, flat on her back with her arms spread out. Blue lay down too and tried to sleep, but he turned from side to side and finally gave it up.

"I don't feel like sleeping," he thought. "I'm all het up about going East. Here I am, old Blue, riding the Century dressed up like John Barrymore and with a swell frill. Yeah, that's me. Boul' Mich' Blue."

He got up, put on his coat, and began to pose in front of the living room mirror.

"Boul' Mich' Blue," he said.

Finally he sat down at the table and laid out a game of solitaire, but he had so many bad breaks with the cards that he began to cheat and then lost interest in the game.

"I know," he said. "What I need is food."

He got up and went to the refrigerator, but there wasn't anything in it except a few pieces of cold meat.

"I guess I'll have to go down to Charley's," he said.

He put on his new soft hat, but hesitated. If they was looking for Pascal they were looking for him, too

Blue finished his coffee, paid his check, and gave Wing a dollar bill. Wing turned the bill over and over.

"Say," he said, "give me another buck and I'll put you on to something hot at Arlington."

Blue laughed and tossed Wing a silver dollar. "Never mind the tip," he said. "I know lots of better ways to lose my dough. Why don't you lay off the ponies, Wing? You can't beat that racket."

"I got the itch," said Wing.

Blue looked into the mirror and adjusted his hat to the proper angle. "Well," he said, "I'm leaving you. I'll send you a postcard from the big burg, Wing."

But Blue noticed that Wing had begun to get nervous, his face was twitching.

"Blue," said Wing, "watch your step. I'm telling you straight, kid. One of Mike's boys was in here buzzing me about you just 'fore she began to get light. I'm telling you straight, kid. It ain't my fight and I wasn't gonna peep. But you're a right guy, Blue." Blue rubbed his hand over his face, then he said:

"It was The Wolf. I seen him go past."

"Yeah," said Wing.

"Which way'd I better go?" said Blue.

"I'd put you upstairs . . ." Wing began. "No use," said Blue. "The Wolf seen me."

Wing drew himself a cup of coffee and drank it at a gulp.

"If they knew I'd peeped they'd bump me sure," said Wing.

Blue stood staring at the counter, then he pulled his hat down over his eyes, and slipped his right hand into the pocket where the gun was.

"Well," he said, "the alley's no good. It's blind my way." The side street won't get me no place. So all I got's the front way. Well," he went on, puffing out his chest, "I got a streak of luck, Wing. It'll hold."

Wing drew himself another cup of coffee.

"Here's hoping," he said.

Blue went to the door and, putting his head out a little way, looked up and down. The street was deserted except for a truck which was coming toward him slowly. It was an oil truck.

"Wing," he said, "has any of Mike's boys got a hide-out anywhere around here?"

"Don't know of none."

"Well," said Blue, "here I go."

"So long," said Wing.

Blue stepped out of the restaurant, threw his shoulders back and began to walk slowly toward Birdy's apartment. The oil truck passed him and went on. The street was quiet. At the end of the street he saw an elevated on its way toward the Loop.

"I wish I was on that baby," he said.

But the nearer he got to the apartment, the surer he became that his luck would hold. It was the first break he'd had since he and Guido hijacked that big Detroit shipment. He had tickets on the Century. When a guy has tickets on the Century he uses them. And that wasn't all. He was a big shot now; the big boy had promised him a bonus; he had on silk underwear.

"Shucks!" said Blue, "it ain't in the cards."

Across from Birdy's apartment he saw the same fat woman leaning out of the window. When he looked up she drew her head in hastily. Blue made a dash for the door, but across the street a gun began to spit.

Blue stumbled, dropped his gun, and ran blindly out into the middle of the street; then he turned and ran blindly back toward the house. An iron fence caught him just below the belt and he doubled over it. Across the street a window was slammed.

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Blue began to try on the suits. He stood in front of the big triple mirror, puffed out his chest, struck attitudes.

PRISON BARS

By Lawton Mackall

This Story, Continued From the Fourth Page, Tells of New Prison Plans Being Launched in New Jersey Penal Institutions by Dwight W. Morrow and Producing Results of National Import.

no special rule. Smith might be put in with Schultz because both their names began with "S." Or he might be put in with Brown for the weighty reason that they both arrived on the same day (which was the case with our friend Pete and his friend). Or he might draw "a couple of other fellows" on the basis of alleged similarity, due to all three being in for assault and battery. As though a like crime meant that they were necessarily all of the same stamp!

SUCH haphazard ways (with the accent on the "hazard") have been done away with. Now, when a new arrival has been through the introductory quarantine of 14 to 30 days (without which there would be danger of epidemics getting in), he is brought up for a thorough and many-sided examination. To wit:

A physician examines him for general health and constitution, reports any physical defects, recommends any medical or surgical work that may seem to be needed, and generally there is something—eyes, tonsils, some chronic ailment.

Next a psychiatrist examines the condition of his nervous system, personality, make-up and sanity. If the man is an alcoholic or a drug addict the signs are noted. An opinion is also given as to whether the condition is curable by treatment, or whether he is a permanent case, unfit ever to be at large.

Then a psychologist examines him from the point of view of intelligence, aptitudes, character and temperament. Computes his mental level and mental age. Finds out, in short, what sort of man this is that the institution has to deal with, how trustworthy he is, what sort of training he is fitted for.

Supplementing the examination, an investigator of the division of classification and parole reports what has been learned concerning the man's home environment and neighborhood conditions. General background, case history.

The supervisor of education and training also contributes an angle, reporting any schooling the man may have had and indicating the apparent possibilities in regard to further instruction; and the disciplinary officer submits a record of the prisoner's behavior during the month since arrival—any "ugliness" displayed and any disciplinary measures that had to be resorted to and with what effect.

On the basis of these reports the Classification Committee, comprising all those mentioned above and presided over by the superintendent of the institution, makes specific, although tentative, recommendations as to the minimum requirements to be met before the individual is eligible for parole. This is enormously important. It means that in the case of a man who is obviously unfit for an unwatched existence, a definite warning is put on record. It means that a man temperamentally unsafe for parole doesn't get paroled unless and until he decidedly changes character.

The trouble is that some pathological type may be in for only a year or two. When he has done his time the law can't hold him further. But in certain extreme cases . . .

Well, for instance, there were three peculiar brothers who had managed to be self-maintaining and apparently self-respecting citizens by working in a stone quarry at \$30 a week each, which was quite enough to run their little home in the country. But they did odd things. Having bought an automobile, and none of them being bright enough to qualify for a driver's license, they would sit in the car on the road in front of their house and "make believe they were motoring." Which was funny in a way until it was discovered that they were perpetrating horrible crimes throughout the neighborhood. When their terms in prison were up instead of letting them back into the community something special was done about them—a point was stretched and they were committed to a State hospital for life. It was the only safe thing to do with them.

But under the old system where men went to prison with no psychological questions asked they would be home today with all their unspeakableness. In their case and in many others classification has proved that grim walls are only part of the business of protecting the public from unsafe persons.

IHAVE already mentioned the savings which the classification system is making possible in New Jersey—both in construction cost and maintenance. For the farm type is far cheaper to build and virtually maintains itself. On the other hand, the profits from the indoor industries in the bastille type of prisons are necessarily limited. Contract labor, which still obtains in a number of States, does not pay its way as far as the State government is concerned. Even the prison shop which manufactures for a "State use" market—that is, for supplying institutions in the same State and other States, as all will be doing after the Hawes-Cooper law goes into effect two years from now—laborers under many disadvantages in comparison with the outside shop. In trades involving skill, such as furniture making or printing, the production is only about a third of what it would be elsewhere because the requisite training is lacking.

The Hawes-Cooper law will put the quietus on contract labor activities now representing

\$47,000,000 worth of output annually, which is a terrific switch to plan for during the coming two years, for the prisoners in these crowded institutions must be kept busy or there will be trouble, not to say riots.

The work done and the spirit in which it is being done have been notably improved by the classification method of assigning men to the jobs they are suited for. As an old head keeper said the other day, and with the conservatism of his 28 years' experience it was quite an admission: "You know how I felt about all this 'old woman' stuff. Well, I see now I was all wet. Classification has cut my job in half. For the first time since I've been in a prison we know where to put a man, and we know that after we've put him there we won't have to switch him around to get any work out of him. I'm a disciplinary officer, but I don't have much to do any more in regard to punishment."

A few of the oldtimers are still skeptical, though, in their attitude toward what the "bug doctors" are doing. One warden who maintained that "ordinary common sense" was better than "any amount of this psychology hocus pocus" attempted to prove his point in picking nine men for transfer to a farm. He deliberately chose men whom the "bug doctors" classified as requiring maximum security. He'd show 'em! He did. Or rather the men themselves did. Every one of the nine promptly escaped!

Aside from this special instance, evasions from New Jersey's prison farms and road construction camps have totaled less than 1 per cent—and less than a tenth of 1 per cent have escaped recapture. The thought of being sent back to a bastille serves as deterrent enough.

Besides, the men are well off—many of them better off than they have ever been before. Living in cantonments, they work hard, but healthfully, in the open air for 8 or 10 hours a day, under the supervision of guards who carry no firearms. And they have the sense of accomplishing something that brings self-respect. The produce they have grown to date has proven salable to the tune of \$600,000. Livestock they have taken care of has won prizes in various county fairs. And the road construction crews have built or repaired 300 miles of highway in the manner that has been pronounced by engineering experts to be best in the State.

Even better, from a sociological point of view, is the record in manhood. As compared with a general prison population, which has a 45 per cent "repeater" or chronic jailbird element, the huskified outdoorsmen are more likely to be rebuilt inwardly as well as physically. Their trend—for it is almost too soon to figure percentages—is notably below the return-average. As one of the guards expressed it, "We seldom see the same man back." And, most significant of all, there has been no riot at any prison farm or prison camp.

As a result of riots in several "maximum-security" institutions, New York some 10 months ago took about 500 men out of the overcrowded bastilles and put them into road camps. It was just an emergency measure, but it worked, with few escapes and with general improvement in morale. Now New York is planning a gradual housing change for her prison population of 6,000; the present congestion is to be relieved by the establishment of camps at low construction cost. But the transfers will have to be made with expert knowledge of what sort of men can be trusted away from bolts and bars; hence New York's concern for classification.

In California the experiment of supplementing the bastille was first attempted some eight years ago, in a small way. Now 25 per cent of that State's prisoners are in cantonments, receiving good pay and earning it. In Wisconsin the State prison farm has grown "like all outdoors." Vermont has reason to be proud of her model farm at Windsor, and Massachusetts of the thriving one at Bridgewater. Virginia's outdoor inmates have no less notably increased and prospered during recent years.

The signs are hopeful that Mr. Morrow's innovation will permit not only 40 per cent of all prisoners, but even taxpayers, a chance to breathe more easily.

Output of Oleomargarine.

THE production of oleomargarine and other butter substitutes during 1929 showed an increase of more than 5 per cent in pounds, with a loss in total value of three-tenths of 1 per cent.

These products came from three sources, the industry specializing in the production of butter substitutes, the meat-packing industry and by-products of other industries. There was a total of 310,000,000 pounds produced, nearly 171,000,000 pounds coming from factories devoted to the manufacture of butter substitutes and 108,000,000 pounds from meat-packing plants.

Substitutes composed entirely of vegetable oils and fats made up a large portion of the output, accounting for 170,000,000 pounds. The materials used in the meat-packing industry were not reported to the Bureau of Census.